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PGA OF AMERICA AWARDS ISSUE

Jim Mrva

2010 PGA Golf Professional of the Year

Let's Get Busy!

As your newly elected President, I am eager to help you grow the game and become even closer to your leadership

To my fellow men and women Professionals, I am honored to have the opportunity to communicate with you for the first time in this forum as the 37th President of The PGA of America. To get right to the point, my primary goals for the next two years are the following: to do everything I can to help you grow participation in this great game of ours, and to bring the leadership of this Association even closer to you.

If you attended or watched on PGALinks.com the 2010 PGA Annual Meeting in Boston, or talked to colleagues who were there, you know it was one of the most thought-provoking gatherings many of us had experienced. A majority of those thoughts were focused on the topic of how to get more people playing golf, which is appropriate, since that underlines all other areas of concern, particularly our employment and our ability to demonstrate our value as PGA Professionals to our employers.

Futurist Jim Carroll helped stimulate the thought process with his keynote address about the incredible rate of change that we as a society find ourselves in, and I was delighted with the lively discussion in the hallways, the passionate positions taken at the microphones and, ultimately, the decisions that were made in the best interests of The PGA of America. It was great to see so many individuals actively participating in our governance process.

Through all the discussions and excitement, what was concurred upon in Boston, and what every green grass PGA Professional from coast to coast must understand, is that WE MUST DEVELOP MORE PLAYERS! We have to dedicate ourselves to making new golfers out of 10 individuals per year – The Power of 10.

You will be hearing a lot about The Power of 10 from me in the coming weeks and months, as well as a lot about the updated version of the PGA Medalist program, which has been developed with heavy input from PGA Professionals who have successful junior programs to assist those facilities that are interested in building one themselves. This multi-faceted approach to growing overall junior participation, which has been on the decline in recent years, could be a great fit for many of your facilities out there, so look for more information on it leading up to the 2011 PGA Merchandise Show.

As your President, I see my role, with assistance from my fellow officers, board members and HQ staff, as making sure your leadership is doing everything it can to support you in the field, and as making sure the lines of communication are working clearly and effectively between the leadership and the rank-and-file membership. You are where you are because of your passion for golf and your desire to share that passion with others, and I can assure you that your officers and board are green grass Professionals who are in the same trenches and want to hear what you have to say, because your opinions, whether about how to best grow the game or what programs and initiatives need our support, count.

Now, in case you're not sure I mean that, I'm putting my mobile phone number and e-mail address at the end of each of these columns. If something is on your mind, tell me about it. I also know a good thing when I see it, and for that reason we are going to continue the Town Hall Meetings that for the past four years under Brian Whitcomb and Jim Remy have been tremendous opportunities to connect with your officers and CEO.

In closing, I want to thank Jim Remy for the outstanding leadership he provided during extremely challenging times over the past 24 months, and Brian Whitcomb for his eight years as a PGA Officer and for providing the momentum of reconnecting with PGA members. I want to congratulate Ted Bishop on being elected PGA Vice President, Derek Sprague on being elected PGA Secretary, and welcome our six new District Directors and our new Independent Director. To all of you reading this, let's get busy growing this great game of ours - because if it's not the PGA Professional then WHO; and if it's not now, then WHEN?

Very Respectfully,

Allen Wronowski

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New Era for Growing the Game

At a busy Annual Meeting, one rally cry was heard above the others – develop more players

By Bob Baal

Growing the game. Since 1916, it has consistently been a primary focus of The PGA of America and its member professionals, and in 2004 the Association and industry took a bold step in creating a national initiative known as Play Golf America. The successes of the national programs featured on the Play Golf America menu have been well-documented, but as attendees of the 94th PGA Annual Meeting were reminded in Boston last month, the world is changing rapidly, and successful organizations are those that anticipate trends and shift assumptions – and the manner in which they operate.

That's the backdrop for player development as we prepare to enter 2011, and newly elected PGA President Allen Wronowski underlines the importance of the topic with his "power of 10" challenge to his fellow Professionals: dedicate yourself to making new golfers out of 10 individuals per year. "I may put an emphasis on junior golf over the next two years but that is merely part of the larger view," says Wronowski. "Our members may focus on juniors or adults; they can choose any program they wish of the ones we have or that they create. The important thing is that we need to spread the word and bring new players into the game."

To do that, PGA Professionals need to be aware of both the opportunities and challenges presented by the current and ever-changing landscape of how Americans communicate, gather information and spend their time and money. Futurist Jim Carroll, who delivered the keynote address at the Annual Meeting, said our society is moving toward "pervasive connectivity" with a rapidly decreasing attention span, and challenged the PGA Professionals in the audience to think about how a standard five-hour, 18-hole round of golf fits into that equation.

These societal challenges could become especially pervasive with juniors, which is not good news considering studies released in 2010 already showed that the number of junior golfers in the U.S. has declined. Conversely, however, high school golf participation has remained flat, and PGA Section activity with junior leagues and tours is up, which should be seen as a beacon showing that organized, structured programs are attracting young players even while overall participation is down.

To that end, The PGA is set to present an updated version of PGA Medalist, promoting a comprehensive collaboration of research and best practices from PGA Professionals, allied associations and the long term player development standards adopted by the PGA World Alliance. The main focus will be on developing core golfers who will have pathways to continue to play golf socially or competitively based on each individual's interest. We will have much more on this approach in upcoming issues of *PGA Magazine*, and extensive presentations to the industry will occur next month at the 2011 PGA Merchandise Show.

Many PGA facilities already have thriving junior programs, and as President Wronowski stated above, while it is important to review The PGA's

Junior golfers, like those shown here at the 2010 PGA Championship Community Relations Clinic, will receive even more attention from player development efforts going forward.

MONTANA PRITCHARD/THE PGA OF AMERICA

resources and best practices elements, the ultimate intent is that new golfers are developed, and how that is achieved is secondary.

With that in mind, we look at several other topics that exist in the junior realm and that were touched on by Carroll in his presentation. One was the staggering increase in obesity rates seen in this country, particularly among youth. Carroll noted that "pervasive connectivity" only exacerbates the problem, and that there is a growing public health mandate to do something about it. The PGA already got a jump by joining The First Lady's Let's Move initiative in 2010, positioning golf as healthy physical activity, a notion that will also be promoted in the updated PGA Medalist campaign.

On this subject Carroll spoke directly to PGA Professionals at municipal facilities, saying that municipalities are having a discussion about wellness, and you need to be a part of this discussion. "You are aligned perfectly to the wellness discussion that is occurring across this country today," he told the audience.

Another Carroll topic of note is an additional opportunity in regards to pervasive connectivity, as he noted that 40 percent of American mothers between the age of 25 and 40 are on Facebook, and that Facebook has replaced the conversation over the backyard fence where moms share their opinions and make recommendations to each other. Citing what his private ski club learned when seeking new members, he said: "The mom who has the greatest degree of influence over the possibility of a family joining a club for a significant capital investment is spending her time in all these new social networks." The result? "We engaged them on Facebook," and the club had "an absolutely stunning year" in enlisting new members.

The lesson here for player development is one that many businesses and industries have learned or are in the process of learning, for better or worse: adjust and innovate, or suffer. A new economy, changing demographics, rapidly changing consumer behaviors and expectations demand that businesses change the way they operate and communicate when it comes to seeking and retaining customers. That's why Wronowski is asking his fellow Professionals to have a renewed focus and "go the extra mile" on player development going forward.

"We need to look at ways to re-present our game so that it appeals to the different audiences who we want playing golf," says the 37th PGA President. "We need to concentrate heavier on juniors, not only because they represent the future of the game, but also because they inspire their parents and friends to play. That's how the power of 10 can really take off, because any one of those 10 who we turn into golfers this year could inspire two, three or even 10 others to take up the game as well. And The PGA has the tools and is creating new tools to help us make that happen."

The primary tools remain the Play Golf America menu of programs: Get Golf Ready and the annual promotions PGA Free Fitting & Trade Up Month, PGA Free Lesson Month, Women's Golf Month and Family Golf Month. Joining them this year is the updated PGA Medalist, which Wronowski notes "has been built by our peers with highly successful programs." The greatest tool, however, remains the army of more than 27,000 men and women PGA Professionals who are not only the experts in the game and business of golf, but also the ambassadors and evangelists who are going to spread the word and put out the welcome mat – by using some different methods and technologies than their predecessors.

Futurist Jim Carroll stressed to PGA Annual Meeting attendees the need to embrace and adjust to the rapid changes taking place in our society.

"We need to **look at ways to re-present our game so that it appeals to the different audiences** who we want playing golf."
—PGA President Allen Wronowski

The previous two years, which ran concurrent with a global economic crisis, taught us the importance of raising awareness of the value of the PGA Professional to his or her golf facility. In Wronowski's mind, the easiest and best way to do that is to have more people paying to play golf at your facility. "We've got to remember that the sustained employment of PGA Professionals runs hand in hand with the growth in the number of people playing the game," he says. "And, as you introduce them to the game, you have the opportunity to develop relationships that will last a lifetime." ■

Bob Baal is The PGA of America's senior publications editor.